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**Talking Points on the Beirut Bombings
(25 October 1983)**

As of 0900 EDT, the casualty count stood at 207 US Marines dead, 75 wounded, and possibly as many as 32 still missing. The French contingent has suffered 42 soldiers dead. Rescue operations continue amid periodic sniper fire.

-- It is unlikely that more Marines will be found alive.

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Iranian-Backed Lebanese Shias Responsible

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Evidence points to Iranian-backed Lebanese Shias as perpetrators of the bombing attacks against the US and French Multinational Force contingents on Sunday.

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The suicidal tactics employed in the bombing--driving a vehicle filled with explosives through the front gates of the target--strongly resemble those used by Iranian agents against Iraqi targets in Paris and Baghdad.

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-- The targeting of French troops also makes Iran a likely suspect because Iran strongly opposed the delivery by France of Super Etendard aircraft to Iraq.

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- The main motive of Iran and its Lebanese allies in sponsoring these attacks would probably be to force the withdrawal of the Multinational Force contingents. [REDACTED]

Several obscure radical Islamic groups have called international press services and claimed responsibility for the attacks.

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- It is unlikely that these groups were involved. They are probably attempting to attract international attention to themselves. [REDACTED]

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Desperate terrorist acts by individuals willing to sacrifice their lives are almost impossible to prevent. Since these groups are composed of a few hundred individuals scattered throughout the Shia neighborhoods of Beirut, it would be very difficult for US forces to target them for counterattacks. [REDACTED]

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Impact on Reconciliation Talks

Nearly all of the opposition leaders scheduled to participate in national reconciliation talks in Geneva on 31 October have condemned the bombings. Neither the attack nor the continued fighting in the mountains southeast of Beirut has caused any political leader to back off from the talks.

- Although many of the opposition leaders genuinely abhor the use of extreme violence, their main motive in denouncing the attacks is probably to deflect any possibility that their own groups could be accused of complicity.

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-- The effectiveness of the bombings will almost certainly compel political leaders to remain cautious and unyielding in the talks.

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Any US counterattacks against targets within Beirut, however, would probably be condemned by most opposition leaders and could reignite the cycle of violence in the capital.

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: Talking Points on the Beirut Bombing

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[REDACTED]

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